

The Van Veghten Heuse
Finderne-Manville
Somerset County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-661

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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The Van Veghten House
Finderne-Manville
Somerset County, New Jersey

Owners: The Singer Manufacturing Company
(Bernhard Meyer, occupant)

Dates of Erection: About 1725; 2nd story about 1830;*
east wing and porches later

Architect: Unknown

Builders: Dirck Van Veghten (1699-1781) and son
Michael Van Veghten (1766-1831) successively

Present Condition: Well preserved

Number of Stories: Two and one-half and cellar

Materials of Construction:

Foundation - brownstone

Exterior walls - brick laid Flemish bond
in original building, common bond in
2nd story and other additions, all
modern painted

Interior walls - brick partywall and
frame partitions, plastered

Chimneys - brick, built into inside of
end walls

Roof - gable, wood shingles not original

Historical Data:

By a deed of 2 August 1694, Captain Thomas
Codrington of Raritan River, Somerset County and
wife Margaret, conveyed to "Michael Direcksen van

*Possibly before 1779, in which case the whole house has
been refinished and the roof rebuilt about 1830 if a fire
(of which no reliable mention is found in printed accounts)
gutted the house.

Veghten" (a) of the same place, a tract of 836 acres there extending north from the river to the mountain, bounded west by the land of John White and east by other land of grantor, being the same tract first patented from the Lords Proprietors of the Province to John Palmer of Staten Island 28 February 1683/4^(b).

(a) Michiel Dircksen³ Van Veghten, b. 28 Nov. 1663 in Greenbush, opp. Albany, N.Y., (eld. son of Dirck Teunise Van Veghten of Catskill, N.Y., and wife Jannetje Michielse Vrelandt, and grandson of Teunis Dirckse Van Veghten who came in 1638 from Vechten, near the city of Utrecht, Holland, in ship "Arms of Norway" to New Netherland with wife and son and settled on farm at said Greenbush) mar. first 21 Nov. 1686 Mary Parker of New Albany and had dau. Mary b. 8 Oct. and bapt. 13 Nov. 1687 (who mar. Albert Ten Eyck and Jeremiah Field) and son Dirck b. 6 Dec. 1689 and bapt. 26 Jan. 1690 in the R.D. Ch. of Albany, after which last date his name is not found in the register. Evidently, he removed, with wife and 2 childn., within 4 years to Raritan River, Somerset Co., N.J., for his wife having d. in July 1690, he mar. 2ndly 2 Apr. 1691 Jannetje Du Mont dau. of Wallerand Du Mont of Kingston, N.Y., and is described in the deed of 2 Aug. 1694 above cited, by which he acquired the homestead farm on the Raritan, as then of that place. His first son Dirck d. 27 Oct. 1693, and his childn. by 2nd wife were Walran b. 11 Dec. 1691; Margrietje b. 29 June 1693 who d. 5 Sept. 1712; Dirck b. 15 July and bapt. 19 Sept. 1699 in the R.D. Ch. of Raritan; and Jannetje b. 2 June and bapt. 11 June 1701, who mar. Jacobus Hegeman. (Munsell, Collections on the Hist. of Albany, 1871, IV, 184. Records of R.D. Ch. Albany publ. in Holland Soc. Yearbook 1904, pp. 22, 44, 49. P. Vechten Jr., The Genealog. Recs. of the Van Vechtens, 1638-1696, pp. 9 and 99. Somerset Co. Hist. Quart. I, 110; II, 40 and 41; IV, 46. Van Veghten family records from bible 1603 Amsterdam, publ. in Genealog. Records by Col. Dames of N.Y. 1917, pp. 268 etc.) Michael Van Veghten, first abovesaid, was commissioned one of the Justices of the Peace for the Counties of Middlesex and Somerset in 1704, 1705, 1707/8, 1710-11 and 1714. (Abstracts of N.J. Commissions, 1703-1769, from Liber AAA, in Publ. of Geneal. Soc. of Pa., VI-VIII).

(b) Recorded in East Jersey Deed Book F, page 81, now deposited in the office of the Secretary of State, Trenton. Abstract of same, as above, published in N.J. Archives, 1st series, XXI, 251.

That the house built by this early Dutch emigrant from the upper Hudson valley on his tract on Raritan River thus acquired in 1694 has not survived and is not part of the present house thereon (here surveyed) appears to be the consensus of opinion quoted as follows:

(1) J.P. Snell, History of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties, 1881 - p. 652: Michael Van Veghten, father of Derrick, "built a one and a half story house that was torn down and replaced with a brick house by Derrick a part of which is still standing on the old homestead."

(2) A.D. Mellick Jr., Story of An Old Farm, 1889, p. 458: The house "was built by Derrick Van Veghten early in the last century, he having been born in 1699 in an adjoining stone house. This earlier structure was erected by his father, Michael, who.....emigrated from the upper Hudson....."

(3) A.V.D. Honeyman, Editor, Somerset County Historical Quarterly, 1912, I, 146: Mrs. James Taylor (1804-1894) wrote in 1887 that her father, Michael Van Veghten (1766-1831), told her that the stone part of the original building was built by his grandfather, Michael Van Veghten (1663-1738), in the 17th century and was "still in use in the kitchen portion of the present house", that the brick building adjoining was erected by his son Derrick Van Veghten (1699-1781) but has undergone some changes. She does not mention a fire having destroyed any part of the original building, but of course such may have been the case.

Our comments on the above three printed references to the house are that the first two are evidently the more accurate. No stone-walled unit is found incorporated in the brick house as mentioned in

the third. The word "adjoining" apparently means nearby but separate.* On the map of Bridgewater Township published in Beers' Atlas of Somerset County 1873, are indicated the house here surveyed and another one adjacent northeast, in the same ownership. The latter may have been the original "adjoining stone house" mentioned above, and is since destroyed.

By his will dated 20 May 1734 and proved 24 March 1737/8, this grantee, as Michiel Van Veghten of Raritan, Somerset County, yeoman, devised to his wife Jannetje the income from his personal estate during her lifetime, to his daughters Mary wife of Jeremiah Field 200 Pounds and Jannetje wife of Jacobus Hegeman the plantation on the south side of Raritan River bought of Philip Headman and then in possession of said Hegeman, also a piece of lowland south of the New River and one-half the land at the great inboght (bend) near Catskill, Albany Co., N.Y., known as lot no. 3, the other half to son Dirck, and to him the residue of the estate (which included the paternal homestead farm here considered) and appointed the son and son-in-law Jacobus Hegeman as executors.(c)

* J.S.Cawley, Historic New Jersey in Pictures, 1939, p. 14, photo of north front of house, with text "built by Derrick Van Veghten about 1700," which is obviously guesswork statement, said Derrick being of record as born 1699. R.F. Bailey, Pre-Revolutionary Dutch Houses and Families 1936, p. 486, photo from northwest corner, and text pp. 464-66 cites "tradition it was built in 1715 by Derrick Van Vechten, but as he was only 16 years of age then, it was probably erected some years later." All of the 5 above references to this house fail to note the secondstory obviously an addition to the original one story, as indicated by difference in brickwork, and assume the present house to be as when occupied by Genl. Greene, 1779.

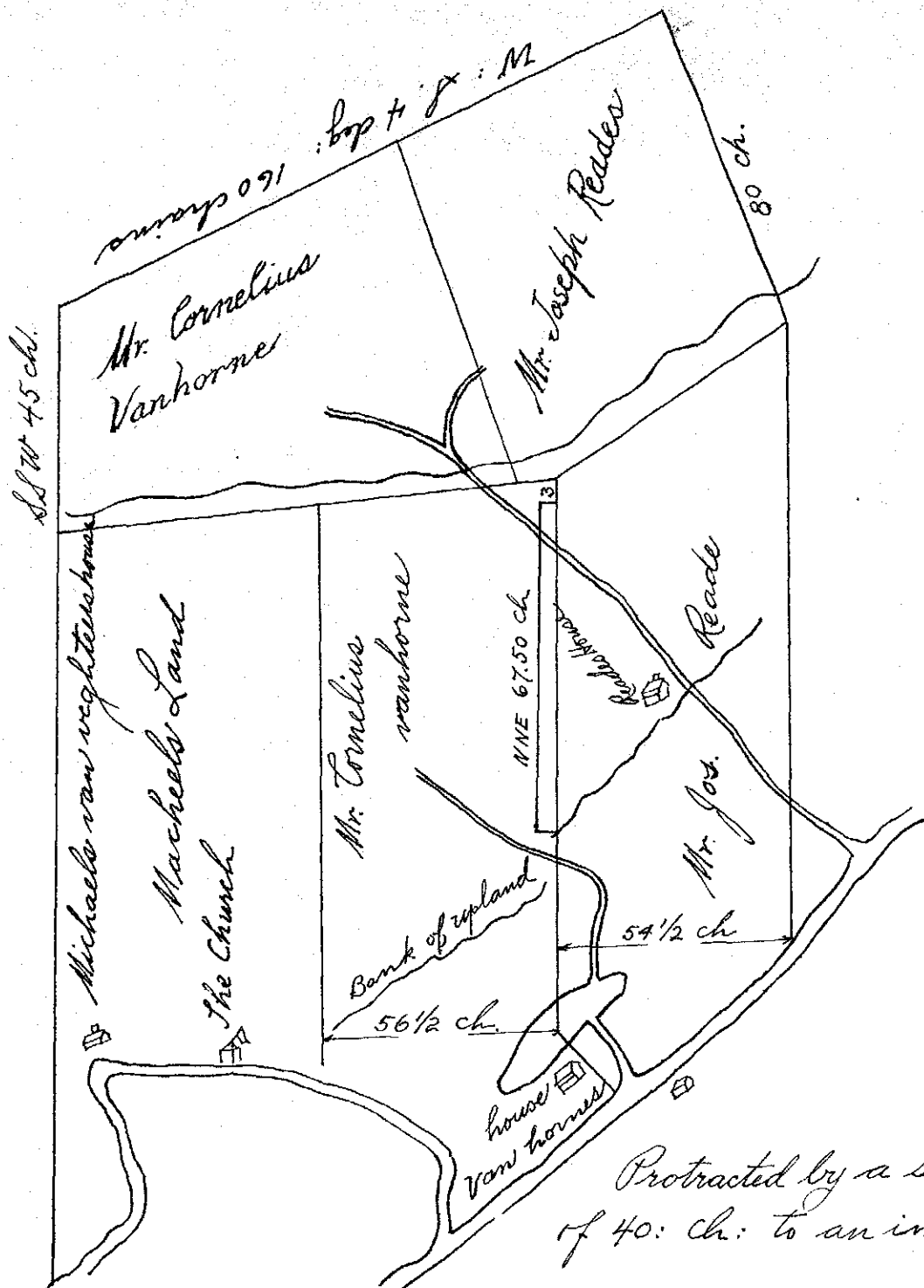
(c) Abstract of Will publ. in N.J., Archives, 1st series XXX, 502.

In a map of division of the assembled 2754 acre estate on Raritan River of Philip French, deceased, into the original three tracts, recorded with a deed of partition thereof dated 20 November 1722, "Michael Van Veghtens house" and "The Church"(e) are indicated on his tract adjacent to the west of French's (then Van Horne and Reade) all four tracts having previously been owned by Thomas Codrington, a copy of which map appears herewith.

Dirck⁴ Van Veghten(f) only surviving son of Michiel Van Veghten, inherited the paternal plantation on the north bank of Raritan River under the terms of the father's will proved in 1738 as above cited. The gravestone in the burial ground which probably marks the site of the original Dutch church(e) is inscribed "In memory of Mr. Derrick Van Veghten who died the 29th day of November A.D. 1781 aged 82 years 4 mos. & 14 days", followed by a pious and

(e) On the left bank of the Raritan River, a half mile east of the house here surveyed. Known at its organization on 9 March 1699 as the Reformed Dutch Church of Raritan, the congregation had built a new structure in 1721 on the north bank of Raritan River, on a site donated by Michael Van Veghten abovesaid, and the building survived until wanton destruction by the incendiary British raiders under Lieut. Col. Simcoe on 27 October 1779. In 1784 its successor was built in the village of Somerville. (Somerset County Historical Quarterly II, 38).

(f) Dirck⁴ Van Veghten, b. 15 July and bapt. 19 Sept. 1699 in the R.D. Ch. of Raritan, son of Michael³ Van Veghten and 2nd wf. Jannetje Du Mont, mar. 1st Nov. 2, 1719 Barbara (Antonides?) by whom dau. Margrietje bapt. 20 Oct. 1720 at N.Branch Ch. He mar. 2nd before 29 Oct. 1724 Judith Brockholst, b. 30 June 1690 dau. of Maj. Anthony Brockholst of N.Y.C., and she d. after 20 Apr. 1742, evidently without issue. He mar. 3rd Sarah Middagh of Raritan, by whom Dirck bapt. Raritan 20 May 1762; d. inf.; Margaret b. 14 Dec. 1763 who m. Jos. Crane; Michiel bapt. 2 Jan. 1766; and Elizabeth bapt. 29 Oct. 1767 who mar. Dr. George Davis of New Brunswick (P. Van Vechten Jr., cited in note a., p. 100, checked with baptism records publ. in Somerset Co. Hist. Quart. III, 229, 231, 232, and IV, 142, also I, 110. Snell, Hist. of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties, 1881, p. 652. N.Y. Genealog. Biogr. Record IX, 117, 188).



Protracted by a scale
of 40: ch. to an inch

Tracing of diagram recorded with a deed dated 20 Nov. 1722 in Liber D2, p. 14 (in office of the Sec. of State, N.J.) showing the adjacent plantations of Michiel Van Veghten, Cornelius Van Horne and Joseph Reade on Raritan River, Somerset Co., N.J. The houses on the sites of those indicated for the last two respect. have been surveyed as NJ-525, "Kells Hall" or "Island Farm" and NJ-523, "Phil's Hill", and that of the first is here considered. The road from modern Finderne crosses the Raritan between his house and the church site, being now County Road 16.

laudatory verse(g). The following obituary notice of him appeared in a newspaper.

(Quote) Trenton, Dec. 26. On Thursday the 29th ult. died at his seat on Raritan, Mr. Derrick Van Vechten, in the 84th year of his age. This gentleman possessed the virtues of patriotism and hospitality in a very eminent degree; - warmly attached to the cause of his country, he took particular pleasure in rendering it any services in his power, and when his property was essentially injured by the winter quarters of a division of our army being fixed on his possession, like a good citizen he submitted without repining, to suffer as an individual, to promote the publick good. His benevolence and hospitality were not confined to the circle of his friends and acquaintances. His doors were ever open to the friendless stranger, his home afforded a resting place and a cheerful welcome to the weary traveller, the blessings of the poor and needy, the widow and orphan daily ascend to Heaven in his behalf. Providence blessed him with a good constitution, and he met the gradual approaches of death with that composure and resignation which proceed from the consciousness of a virtuous life and a well ground hope of the divine acceptance. The general sorrow of the numerous assembly which attended the funeral on the Sunday following, testified their sense of his merit and their loss.(h)

(g) Gravestone inscription as cited in a very romantic fiction, "The Historical Van Veghten House" (Somerset Co. Hist. Quart. I, 92-97). The date 24 Dec. 1778 therein given for Genl. Washington's entertainment in the house is shown to be an error in II, 15. The date is given 19 March 1779 per note (i) hereafter.

(h) The New Jersey Gazette, 2 Jan. 1782, reprinted in N.J. Archives 2, V, 351.

Dirck⁴ Van Veghten (signature) by his will dated 17 April 1777 and proved 13 March 1782, devised to his son Michael a negro man, silver tankard and a horse, his wife Sarah and daughters Margaret and Elizabeth to have a quarter interest with the son in the residue of personal estate. To the said two daughters a tract of 200 acres "of the farm I now live on, situated on the River Raraton, in Somerset County", to be taken off the east side by a line parallel to the line of the adjacent farm lately of John Van Horne decd., the same to be divided between the two devisees equally when Elizabeth arrives at 21 years and they to cast lots for first choice in the division then. The "remaining part of the farm about 140 acres whereon I now live" he devised to the son Michael, also a lot in the rear of Mathias Ten Eyck's land, a 10 acre lot between Bergen Town and Communipaw in Bergen County, N.J., and a lot in the city of Albany, N.Y., all to the two daughters in the event of death of devisee underage, with remainder, in event of their deaths underage, to nephew and niece, Jacob Ten Eyck and Margaret Hageman the whole farm to be in possession of the wife Sarah until the said son Michael arrival at 21, providing she remain a widow.*

The Inventory of the personal estate of Dirck Van Veghten abovesaid, dated 28 February 1782 amounted to more than 3000 Pounds, the items including 23 horses, 4 negro men, 8 boys, 7 wenches and 6 girls.

*Abstract from original will - See also publ. in N.J. Archives XXXV, 417.

During the winter of 1778-9, General Nathanael Greene made his headquarters in this house(i) while part of the American army was encamped on the farm. In a letter(j) to Colonel Wadsworth he described a dance at the house on or shortly before 19 March 1779, when General Washington "danced with Mrs. Greene for three hours without sitting down" and stated that "upon the whole, we had a pretty little frisk."

Michael⁵ Van Veghten, baptized in the Raritan Church 2 January 1766, son and devisee of Dirck Van Veghten abovesaid, inherited and resided on the ancestral farm (here considered) in Bridgewater Township. By deed of 28 February 1797, he with his wife Elizabeth conveyed to Thomas Nesbitt of Hillsborough Township, for 513 pounds three tracts in the former place, including the 75 acre "Homestead and mansion house lot," describing it as bounded south by Raritan River, east by a hundred acre lot of Cornelius Van Doren, formerly of Margaretta Brand, north by the Raritan Road* and west by a small brook, "with all and singular the houses, barns, gardens, orchards" etc.

(i) "New York, Decomber 19. By late accounts from New Jersey, we are informed that General Washington's Headquarters were at Mrs. Wallace's, about twelve miles from Brunswick; the Earl of Stirling's at Convivial Hill, a seat of Philip Van Horne, Esq., about seven miles from Brunswick; Major General Green's at Mr. Van Vechten's on the Raritan River; Brigadier General Knox's with the artillery at Colonel M'Donald's at Pluckamin, about eighteen miles from Brunswick; with these four General Officers there are about seven and twenty hundred Rebels; Brigadier-General Maxwell commands at Elizabeth Town with his Brigade consisting of about 800 militia....." (The New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury, 21 Dec. 1778; abstracts from, publ. in N.J. Archives 2nd, series, I, 599).

(j) The letter is variously quoted in W.J. Mills, Historic Houses of New Jersey (1902) pp. 248-251; A.D. Mellick Jr., cited above (1889); and K.H. Burdsall in Somerset Co., Hist. Quarterly (1912) pp. 92-97.

*The old York Road which then ran just north of the house, but was later abandoned for the Easton Turnpike (County Road #2). See S.C.H.Q.I, 99.

The grantee, Thomas Nesbitt evidently occupied the house thus acquired, and died between 5 March 1815 and 20 February 1816, the dates of signing and of proving his will in which he ordered his executors to sell all of his estate at public auction.

Accordingly, by deed of 30 March 1816, the executors, Samuel Swan, Thomas and Hugh Nesbitt, conveyed to Ralph Sansbury of Middlesex County, in consideration of \$11,483.10, seven lots lying in Bridgewater and in Hillsborough Townships. Sansbury and his wife Sarah then conveyed the same seven lots to Michael Van Veghten for the same price, both parties being of Bridgewater, by deed of 1st May 1817, including No. 1, "the homestead and mansion house lot situated in Bridgewater", containing 75 acres, the same described above. Michael Van Veghten thus recovered possession of the ancestral home (here surveyed).

This Michael⁵ Van Veghten(k) evidently occupied the place and by his will dated 24 February 1830 Bridgewater Twp., (proved 14 January 1832) devised shares in his personal estate to his daughters, Sophia Talmadge, Maria Elmendorf, Jane Van Veghten and Elizabeth, and to Phebe Magie in right of her

(k) Michael⁵ Van Veghten, bapt. 2 Jan. 1766 in R.D. Ch. Raritan, d. 29 Dec. 1831, mar. 10 Apr. 1787 Elisabeth La Grange, who d. 1 May 1856, and had issue; Dirck bapt. 1 June 1788 who d. 28 Apr. 1789; Elisabeth Mercereau bapt. 30 Jan. 1791 who mar. 1. Genl. John Frelinghuysen and 2. John I. Gaston; Sarah 31 Jan. 1796 who mar. Peter Elmendorf; Margaret bapt. 11 Nov. 1798 who mar. David Magie; Sophia bapt. 16 Aug. 1801 who mar. Major Thomas Talmadge; Jane bapt. 28 Oct. 1804 d.s.p. 1 Aug. 1894, who mar. 1. William Wilson and 2. James Taylor; and Richard bapt. 26 Mar. 1809, (Records of Ref. Dutch Ch. of Raritan, publ. in Somerset Co. Hist. Quarterly IV, 145, 147, 228, 291, 293, 294, 297, and V, 127 and 166, also III, 105. Snell Hist. of Hunterdon & Somerset Counties 1882, p. 652. T.F. Chambers, Early Germans of N.J., 549. Genealog. Mag. N.J. IV, 61).

mother deceased. To his son Richard⁶ Van Veghten⁽¹⁾ was devised 125 acres of low and up-land, "Beginning at the New Jersey Turnpike Road, where the same crosses the mountain road, and running eastward along the said road so far as to lay off the said 125 acres.....to be bounded on the East by a straight line parallel to the line between the farm of Matthew Williamson and my farm and running to the Raritan River".

But the farm was seized from the estate of Michael Van Veghten decd. and ordered sold to satisfy a mortgage held by Peter Z. Elmenderf. It was bought in by the said son and devisee, Richard Van Veghten by deed of 1st May 1837 from the sheriff, in which it is described as containing 100 acres, bounded south by Raritan River, north by the Turnpike road, west by the farm formerly of Matthew Williamson decd., and east by other lands of the estate.

Richard⁶ Van Veghten son and devisee above-named, with wife Mary, being of Somerset County and apparently residing on the ancestral farm, conveyed to Charles G. Wilson of Hunterdon County by their deed of 30 September 1843, in consideration of \$9000, the 125 acre farm which had been devised to him by his father, Michael Van Veghten as above described. By sheriff's deed of 27 February 1862, the same property passed to Caleb T. Ames*, and by another of 15 January 1876 it went from Ames to Agnes T. White-nack of Bernards and Mary H. Horning of Bridgewater and their respective husbands.

(1) Richard Van Veghten, b. 19 Dec. 1809, mar. 1st 21 Dec. 1834 Mary Lord and had son Benjamin b. 29 Dec. 1838 who mar. Julia Styles and Ella Miller. Richard mar. 2ndly 9 Feb. 1867, Miriam Betts and had 4 daus. and a son Saml. who d. 1891. (P. Van Veghten cited in a, p. 109-110)

(*) Map of Bridgewater Twp. publ. 1873 in Beers' Atlas of Somerset Co. pl. 30, shows C.T. Ames in poss. of this house and the one next east, both as approached by a long lane south from the turnpike road instead of by the present one west from the FINDERNE-MANVILLE Road.

The two grantees last named, being of Bernards Township, Somerset County, and of Caler, Illinois, respectively, sold the farm to Bernard Meyer of Bridgewater Townships by their deed of 13 April 1897. Meyer and wife Adelena, being still of Bridgewater and evidently occupying the farm and its ancient house (here surveyed) sold it to the Somerset Holstein Breeders Company, a New Jersey corporation, by deed of 29 July 1914, reserving a lot which fronted the west side of the road from Weston (Manville) to Finderne. This grantor, Bernhard Meyer, was residing in the borough of Somerville, some three miles west of the farm, at the time of his death in 1931, having devised part of his estate to his executor in trust for his wife and after her death all to his children equally.

Evidently the testator had regained possession of the Van Veghten farm from the corporation to which he had sold it in 1897 as abovesaid, for by a deed of 20 February 1934, his executors conveyed it to his daughter-in-law Lillian L. Meyer, and by deed of same date, that corporation (by trustees in dissolution) completed the title to her and her husband, Bernhard Meyer Jr., and they, by a third deed of same date, conveyed it to the Singer Manufacturing Company, of Elizabeth, New Jersey. Mr. Meyer remained on the farm and occupied the house as tenant at the time of our survey thereof in July 1940.

Architectural Analysis:

As shown on our survey drawings, the house has been subject to two additions to the original structure of circa 1725, the remaining Flemish bond brickwork of which one-story house is obvious in the west end wall and part of the south front. The relieving brick arches over the first story windows of that front also indicate this early date. Obviously, the 8 inch second story wall of common

brickwork, naively set back some 4 inches from the face of the 17 inch older wall below, is a subsequent addition. Remodelling is further indicated by the brick jamb built into first floor windows of south front to accommodate frames less wide than the original ones. Interior finishing woodwork throughout the house is patently of post-Revolution period, some of it even as late as 1830 as witnessed by the large scale moldings of door and window trim. The east wing is clearly of the later date, as also the verandah porch the length of the north front which then faced the highway since abandoned.

Reference:

Report of search of title by Thomas J. Riley, H.A.B.S. abstractor, received 9 August 1940

Lewis D. Cook
Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams
SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.
District Officer

me 12/10/40